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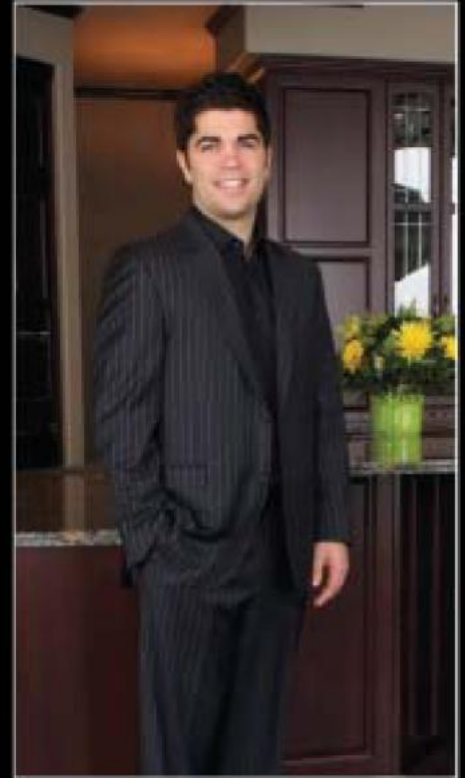
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Cover: Heggie residence renovation inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, Edwards and Edwards Architects.

Unless noted otherwise, all stories and photographs in *Saskatoon Home* are by Darrell Noakes

Designing the Future

HOME

Current home architecture and design involve far more than pleasing form and function. Now we are taking into account energy efficiency, sustainable building materials, leaving a minimal footprint on the environment, integration into an existing community or in some cases, creating one. What is also

becoming more apparent than ever in Saskatoon is the need for more affordable homes. Along with handsome residences within the reach of those with upper-end incomes or wealth, there is a need for housing by those with lower to middle incomes – the very people who work in our much-needed serv-

ices, trades and professions or who have special needs.

Can directional home design and construction address all of these factors? The answer is that it is possible. Many of Saskatoon's architects, designers, builders and developers are starting to incorporate green, sustainable and affordable principles into their vision. Suppliers are carrying more environmentally friendly materials and products. The City itself places priority on creating opportunities for user-friendly housing within the means of many.

Knowledge is the key as Saskatoon progresses in its growth, which includes an expanding population and increased demand on land and resources. It is up to government, building professionals and home owners to educate themselves on the needs of our situation as we move into the next decade.

Dona Sturmanis
Senior Editor

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FRONTLINES

RiverGreen Development Design on Target

RiverGreen Ecovillage has seen a high demand for its proposed development at the corner of Avenue C and 19th Street.

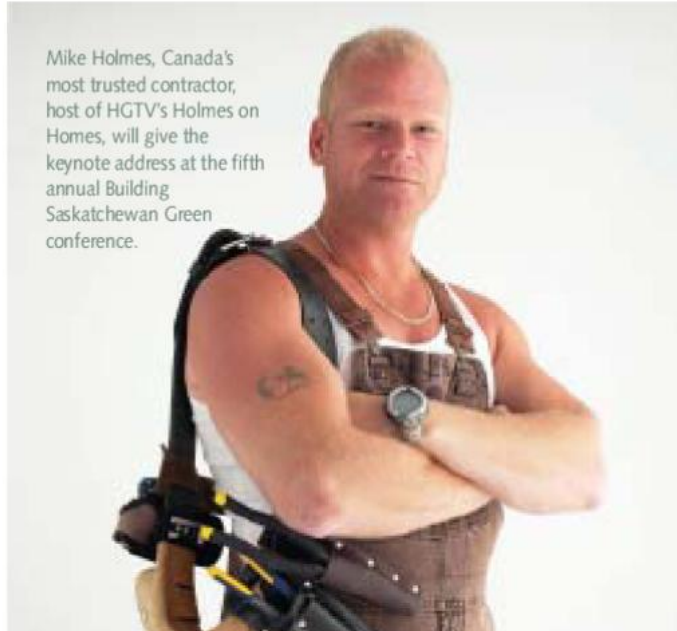
"We have had a very strong response," says Rick Olmstead, the project's board chair. "The key thing is that we've been able to talk to the people who are interested in RiverGreen. By talking to them, we've gathered a lot of information about what people are really looking for and that has helped us to refine the project and fine tune it."

The developer's integrated design process will continue to gather information as the project moves into its final design stage, says Olmstead.

"That's been the history of this project all along, with this integrated design process reaching out, trying to understand the community you're building in, the people you're building for," he says.

"I think this is really just in keeping with everything that we've done from day one: continuing to try to understand how the people that want into the project want to see it and trying

Mike Holmes, Canada's most trusted contractor, host of HGTV's *Holmes on Homes*, will give the keynote address at the fifth annual Building Saskatchewan Green conference.



to build something that will create a sense of community at the end of the day.

"It's a very different process. Typically, developers find some land, come up with a plan, put together some details and start building it. Although maybe we're doing something that's not typically done here in Saskatoon, certainly it's something that's been done in other areas. Developers in larger cities will go to a great deal of trouble to understand their customers. Our process is a little more intimate, perhaps, in terms of trying to understand the community here."

Construction is scheduled to begin next spring. The project is expected to be open by sum-

mer or fall of 2010.

Support for Rivergreen Ecovillage at Saskatoon's River Landing Phase II grew out of Road Map 2020, a movement to create a more sustainable Saskatoon. Road Map 2020 began in 2004 as a partnership of the Meewasin Valley Authority, Saskatchewan Environmental Society and City of Saskatoon's Environmental Advisory Committee.

Green Week Proclaimed in Saskatoon

Saskatoon City Council has proclaimed October 27 to November 2, 2008 as Green

Week. Green Week provides an opportunity for organizations or individuals interested in "building Saskatchewan green" to hold events and promote activities that promote sustainable building in Saskatchewan.

Green Week encompasses the fifth annual Building Saskatchewan Green conference and trade show of the Canada Green Building Council Saskatchewan chapter. The conference brings together participants from across the provincial building industry spectrum. The conference and Sustainable Living Expo take place October 30 and 31 at TCU Place.

Building Saskatchewan Green was initiated by Kelly Winder of the Saskatchewan Research Council, Henry Lau with Stantec Architecture and Murray Guy of Integrated Designs.

As many as 1000 people are expected to attend, including architects, engineers, interior designers, owners, developers and the public. Exhibitors include green service providers, manufacturers and educators.

Mike Holmes, host of HGTV's *Holmes on Homes* show, is giving the keynote address. The closing plenary session is presented by Dr. Mitchell Joachim, a partner at Terreform,

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a non-profit organization that promotes ecological principles in the urban environment. Conference sessions include sustainable water treatment, wind energy, green financing, LEED for contractors and sustainable communities.

Saskatoon to Preserve Night Sky

Saskatoon City Council has decided to replace municipal lighting with dark-sky friendly fixtures. In August, council accepted a recommendation to develop a comprehensive and integrated dark sky lighting policy that will apply to all areas within the current and future city limits.

The recommendation, which stems from a report submitted to council by the Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee (SEAC), will see existing fixtures on all public property replaced with flat-lens, full-cut off style lighting. The new lighting will go in as current fixtures wear out and need to be replaced.

Last year, council adopted a policy to install flat-lens fixtures in new neighbourhoods, with exceptions for streetlights on arterials and major thoroughfares.

The recent decision means that the administration will draft policies for city-owned property, in addition to

streetlights, including building lighting.

The SEAC report recommends that the main criteria for selecting lighting fixtures in Saskatoon should be "energy efficiency, dark sky compliance and the long-term maintenance costs."

Lights should have minimum impact on the environment by eliminating glare, light trespass, light pollution and wasted energy, the report said.

Saskatoon city councillor Glen Penner, chair of the city's finance and administration committee which oversees the work of the SEAC, says he feels good about the decision.

"Absolutely, I think it's the way we ought to go," he says.

"It was a good decision," says Sean Shaw, vice-chair of SEAC.

"Any light that goes up is wasted," he says. The city council decision fits the city's greenhouse gas emission reduction plans, he says.

"Also, it comes down to glare for drivers. It comes down to the light shining into your houses and your businesses at night.

"If you really want to go to a comprehensive dark sky policy, you need to start looking into not just streetlights, you have to start looking into buildings and not leaving lights on all night."

Richard Huziak, a Saskatoon astronomer and member of the Saskatchewan Light Pol-



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lution Abatement Committee of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, says that if everything in the report is implemented, "broadly speaking, all lighting done by the City of Saskatoon, for all reasons, will be dark sky compliant."

That would include wall packs (lighting on the sides of buildings), parking lot lights and other types of lighting. There would still be some exceptions, such as streetlights on arterials and other major thoroughfares, he says. But the decision allows Saskatoon Light and Power, as well as designers and others, to choose dark sky compliant lighting.

Saskatchewan Building Permits Up in June

Saskatchewan had the highest increase in residential permits in Canada according to Statistics Canada's seasonally unadjusted numbers when comparing June 2008 to June 2007. Residential permits were up by 61.3 per cent.

"This is a good indicator that more Saskatchewan people are benefiting from our prosperous times," enterprise and innovation minister Lyle Stewart said in a news release. "More families have the financial means to further set down roots in our province by building new homes. To see this

stellar growth indicates that Saskatchewan businesses and families are in a position to take advantage of the opportunities that are contributing to the momentum driving our economy."

As well, Statistics Canada indicates Saskatchewan had the second largest percentage increase in building permits in the nation on a seasonally adjusted basis in June 2008.

Seasonally adjusted, Saskatchewan's value of building permits totalled \$192 million in June 2008, up five per cent when compared to May 2008 when figures hit \$183 million. Newfoundland recorded the highest increase, up 19.1 per cent.

The seasonally unadjusted numbers for June show that Sas-

katchewan had an increase of 7.4 per cent to \$212.1 million, up from \$197.5 million in June 2007. That was the fourth highest increase in Canada, but well ahead of the national average which declined by 9.1 per cent over that period.

Single-detached Housing Starts Fall in July

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reported that Saskatoon experienced a decline in July total housing starts compared to that month a year earlier.

Year-to-date figures continue to exceed the housing starts numbers recorded at this time in 2007

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and are the highest seen since 1983.

Saskatoon single-detached starts fell 23 per cent in the month of July. This is the second consecutive month of decline on the singles side in 2008. July multi-starts also fell off to 105 units, down from the 149 starts in July 2007. Notwithstanding the weakness in monthly starts activity, year-to-date starts figures remain impressive. So far this year, Saskatoon's total housing starts have reached 1,789 units, the highest seen in 25 years. Both single-detached and multi-starts have now recorded their highest levels since the 80s. Robust starts activity has resulted in more than 1,300 housing units under construction in Saskatoon, the highest level of home building activity seen since July 1985.

"Demand for new, single-detached housing has slowed in both of Saskatchewan's major centres," said Paul Caton, senior market analyst for CMHC Saskatchewan. "Price inflation on the new home side and an abundance of resale listings are two factors playing a role in the cooling of demand for new housing."

Real Estate Association Disputes Merrill Lynch Report

The head of the Saskatoon Region Association of Realtors thinks that Merrill Lynch Canada missed the mark on a report released in August that

described Saskatoon's housing prices as overvalued by as much as 50 per cent.

"Saskatchewan is experiencing the hottest economy in Canada," association executive officer Harry Janzen wrote following news reports of the Merrill Lynch study. "Evidence of this economic activity is reflected in all areas not limited to new home construction."

The average price of a residential home in Saskatoon in July was \$292,000, or \$22,000 below the national average of \$314,000, Janzen pointed out. In addition, the Merrill Lynch study reported a drop in residential construction, while a Statistics Canada study stated that Saskatchewan building permits were being issued at record levels, he wrote.

The Merrill Lynch Canada report, titled "Peaked: Canada's housing market in depth," said that Canada's housing market is entering a "sustained downturn" from a combination of oversupply and overvalued home prices. The report forecasts that upward pressure on house prices will slow, while Western markets will be "most vulnerable to outright declines."

Canada is not expected to experience the kind of real estate bust that is currently being experienced in other countries, notably the United States. But some markets in Saskatchewan and British Columbia appear to be overvalued, the report said.

The Merrill Lynch calculations were done by economists David

Wolfand Carolyn Kwan, based on current prices, affordability and long-term average valuations. The report was released the same day Statistics Canada reported that residential and corporate construction had dropped nationally.

Feds Announce Affordable Housing Grants for Municipalities

The federal government has announced grants of up to \$5,000 to increase housing affordability and choice under the renewal of the Affordability and Choice Today (ACT) initiative. The honourable Monte Solberg, minister of human resources and social development and minister responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) announced the funding in May.

The two-year \$650,000 initiative provides grants to local teams of municipalities and housing stakeholders, who promote the improvement of planning and building regulations in their communities to lower the cost of housing.

The initiative is funded by CMHC and administered and delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), with the participation of the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA).

In addition to providing grants,

ACT experts promote best practices and lessons learned from the projects undertaken.

ACT was created in 1990 to fund and promote projects spearheaded by local teams of municipalities, non-profit housing groups and other housing stakeholders to overcome regulatory barriers and make regulations more responsive to the housing needs of communities across Canada.

The best practices and lessons learned from regulatory reform projects are promoted by ACT staff at workshops, conferences and other events and are made available on the ACT website.

ACT projects have led to a range of actions, including:

- Changes in bylaws and regulations to improve housing affordability and choice
- Streamlining of building permit approval processes for greater efficiency
- Enhancing working relationships between municipalities and housing sector stakeholders
- Creating alternative development standards
- Removing regulatory barriers to the creation of secondary suites and rooming homes.

Local Home Sales Cooling

Saskatoon's housing resale market on par with sales figures from 2005 and 2006, according to a news release issued by the Saskatoon Region

Association of Realtors (SRAR). July sales of 348 homes declined 18 per cent from 422 the previous year, but the 2008 figure is comparable to the same month in 2005 and 2006. Year-to-date sales of 2503 were down 15 per cent from last July but ahead of 2005 and 2006, the real estate association reported.

The average sales price in July was \$292,428, 20 per cent higher than the 2007 average of

\$244,327. The 2007 average was 57 per cent higher than a 2006 average of \$159,493. The national average selling price as reported by Canadian Real Estate Association was \$314,028, up 3.6% from the same time last year.

Total sales for July were \$101,765,000, similar to July 2007, SRAR reported. Year to date sales totalled \$724,928, 885, and 11 per cent increase over 2007. The average residential price is derived by taking the



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month's dollar volume of homes sold and dividing that number by the unit sales number. The percentage of change should not be used unilaterally as prices vary from area to area.

There were 832 properties placed on the market in July, 42 per cent more than during July 2007 when 585 homes were listed for sale. The year to date 5,142 homes have been placed on the market, a 46 per cent increase over the previous year.

Activity in areas surrounding Saskatoon was similar to the city, SRAR reported, with an average selling price of \$268,236, up 26 per cent from the 2007 average of \$213,435. Year to date, 610 residential properties have sold in areas in and around

Saskatoon, a decline of 12 per cent from the previous year. The total number of listings increased to 283, a 56 per cent rise from 181 during 2007.

The Saskatoon and area market is fairly similar to other areas in Canada, SRAR said. In Edmonton, the average selling price was \$341,376.

"The market has returned to a more normal pace reducing the buying frenzy of last year," the SRAR news release said. "Strong confidence in the local and provincial economy continues to fuel the market. Labour shortages substantiate the demand for workers in all sectors not limited to nursing and construction. Our resource sector continues to lure workers and

many businesses would like to expand all requiring employees all of which have housing requirements. The association anticipates similar market activity during the third quarter of this year."

Boom Causes Scarcity for Habitat

Saskatoon's real estate and construction boom is putting pressure on Habitat for Humanity funds and volunteers.

Rising land and materials prices and a tight labour market are increasing the non-profit organization's costs.

Materials costs are rising about 10 per cent a year, says Ian MacLennan, executive director of Habitat for Humanity Saskatoon. Land costs have doubled, he says. With volunteers in short supply because of the pace of the industry, Habitat has been forced to pay for trades such as plumbing and electrical.

Housing Affordability Task Force Report

In June, a provincial task force on housing affordability established in March presented its recommendations for improving affordability of housing in Saskatchewan.

The report, titled *Affordable Housing: An Investment*, prepared by Ted Merriman and Bob Pringle, is the result of consultations with residents of 16 Saskatchewan communities. In total, the task force consulted with 85 individuals, groups and organizations and received 53 written submissions.

The authors presented 36 immediate, short term, medium term and long term recommendations, including:

- encouraging municipalities to equalize tax rates between multi-unit residential buildings and single-family dwellings and streamline bylaws for the creation of secondary suites
- increasing the income threshold for seniors to qualify for social housing
- reducing income taxes for low to moderate income earners or expanding the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement, so that seniors and low to moderate income earners are better able to afford rental housing
- introducing provincial tax incentives to stimulate the supply of affordable housing
- introducing government programs to accelerate private construction of rental and affordable housing
- dedicating surplus land and buildings for affordable housing
- amending legislation governing rent and lease increases
- enhancing partnerships with community based, First Nations and Metis organizations
- engaging the federal govern-



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ment to restructure tax laws concerning rental income and capital cost allowances

- incorporating energy efficient building practices into affordable housing

- developing a new affordable housing agreement federal government with additional federal funding for affordable housing

- revising provincial legislation to enable municipalities to incorporate inclusionary zoning

- lowering the education portion of property taxes

- reviewing skilled labour, training and immigration requirements to ensure there are sufficient tradespersons to construct new housing in the province

- providing resources for municipalities for better affordable housing planning

- exploring methods and tax incentives for generating private capital pools for affordable housing

Government Response

The Province is acting quickly to implement immediate-priority recommendations made by the Task Force on Housing Affordability to help those most affected by escalating housing costs in Saskatchewan, social services minister Donna Harpauer said in a news release.

"We are addressing this issue by implementing some immediate relief while we develop further medium and long-term responses to the housing challenges in the province," the cabi-

net minister said.

Effective August 1, 2008, shelter rates for low-income renters increased in the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP), Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA) and Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement (SRHS). In total, the enhancements will immediately benefit approximately 6,500 households at an annual cost of \$11.3 million.

A Saskatoon family with one or two children receiving benefits under SAP, TEA and the SHRS will see an increase of up to \$189 per month (from \$604 to \$793). A single person with a disability will see a monthly increase of up to \$126 (from \$528 to \$654).

The Provincial Training Allowance (PTA) is being increased by \$1.4 million, to help about 5,000 students. Changes to the student loan program will benefit an additional 10,000 students, advanced education, employment and labour minister Rob Norris said.

New changes to address housing affordability include:

- increasing shelter rates for clients on SAP and TEA

- expanding the Saskatoon and Regina boundaries to include the Statistics Canada metropolitan areas

- increasing the PTA living allowance and the shelter amounts in the Canada Saskatchewan integrated student loan program

- Increasing the SRHS between

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- introducing automatic rate adjustments for these provincial programs

- increasing income thresholds for seniors who rely on social housing programs

- increasing per diem rates paid to community based organizations operating emergency shelters

- introducing changes to the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act to expand the board governance.

The government pledged to implement more innovative solutions in the weeks and months ahead, Harpauer said.

Developer Eyes Affordable Green Housing

Calgary developer Stoneset Equities has sent a formal proposal to Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to construct a \$66-million, 28-storey high-rise that would include 120 units for people with long-term disabilities or low incomes and 20 shelter beds.

The building, to be constructed in the Saskatoon Police Service parking lot north of the police station, would also have 130 rental and condominium units plus commercial space.

Provincial government and city officials announced plans

last October for the assisted living units, to be managed by Lighthouse Supported Living Inc. That portion of the project is expected to cost \$14.58 million, with the housing corporation contributing \$11.5-million and the city \$1.46 million.

Lighthouse currently operates 64 units out of the former Capri Hotel at 20th Street and Second Avenue.

The provincial housing authority has not made a decision on developing the project, although city planning manager Lorne Sully describes Stoneset's as the leading proposal at the moment.

Before any project can go ahead, the city first needs to assess the site for environmental concerns. In the past, the site has held a gun range and an automotive shop. Stoneset would need city approval for a 28-storey building. Once approved, construction is planned to begin in January and is estimated to take 18 to 24 months to complete.

Currently, downtown buildings are restricted to a height of 76 metres, or roughly 25 storeys. Height restrictions are in place mainly to accommodate aircraft flight paths, but the proposed Stoneset tower is outside the flight path.

The Stoneset development would consist of a combination of shelter beds, assisted living units, market rental suites and condominium suites starting at around \$300,000. The project

would consist of three buildings surrounding a courtyard. The design includes 270 parking stalls in four underground levels, of which 100 would be used for police parking. The main floor would include commercial space. Two levels of office space would face 23rd Street.

The development is expected to be one of the most environmentally-friendly in the city. Stoneset Equities CEO Tony Argento said he wants the project to go beyond LEED certification. The building would include rooftop gardens, recycled water, large atriums and power cogeneration, depending on final cost estimates.

Rooftop gardens would capture rainwater, as well as aid in cooling the building in summer. Grey water, the water left over after washing, would be treated and re-used for flushing toilets and irrigating gardens.

The project would use natural gas or biodiesel to generate its own electricity, recovering waste heat for use within the building, requiring the provincial electrical grid only as a backup.

Window placement and atrium design will further reduce the need for electricity. The project aims to use only half the power normally consumed by a building of that size.



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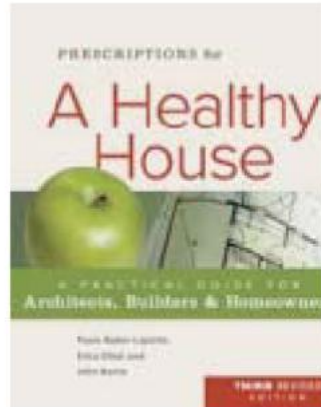
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North Americans spend 90 per cent or more of their life inside a building. Indoor air pollution has been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as one of the top four environmental health risks.

Amidst the sweeping concern about the impacts buildings have on the environment, attention is finally being paid to the effects that building materials and construction methods have on human health. Both are aspects of Bau-Biologie or Building Biology, both trademarked concepts in the U.S.

Bau-Biologie is not new. Forty years ago, concerned professionals from a variety of disciplines in Germany noticed how health in the general population declined following the post-



WW 2 building boom. Research was conducted by a variety of specialists, some peers joined forces and a course on Bio-Biologie was taught at a Bavarian vocational school. Eventually the program became the Institut für Baubiologie und Ökologie Neubuern (IBN) which succeeded through education and publications to gain a reputation through Northern Europe.

Helmut Ziehe, an international city engineer, translated the educational material of Bau-Biologie into English in the mid-80s and founded The International Institute for Bau-Biologie & Ecology (IBE).

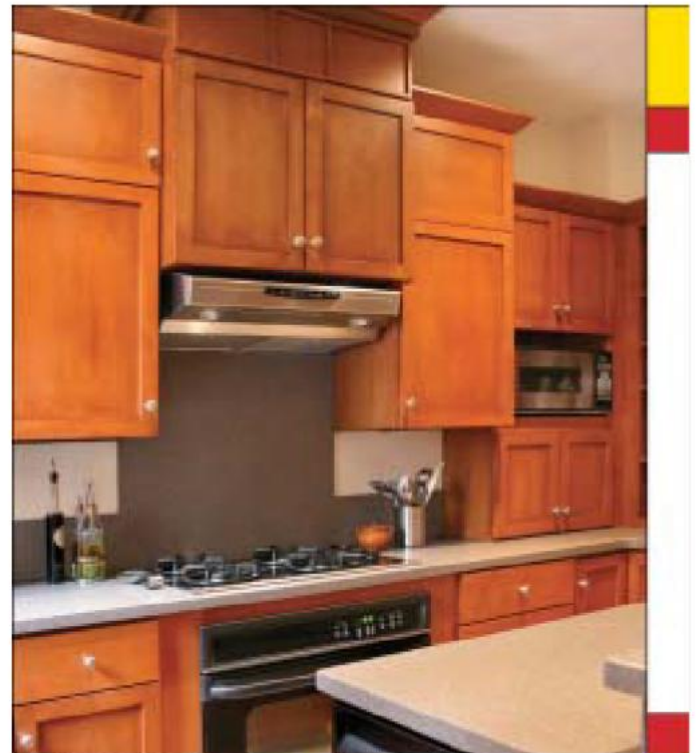
Even by the late 80s, few people were paying attention to the effect of the built environment on human health. But through the efforts of the Institute, Ziehe and a few others, the Bau-Biologie movement spread internationally to where it has be-

come a critical sustainable building issue.

Prescriptions for a Healthy House: A Practical Guide for Architects, Builders & Homeowners was inspired by Bau-Biologie. In its third edition, this indispensable book outlines the risks presented by standard building materials and methods from indoor air pollution to toxicity. Guidelines are presented on what to do differently, and how to obtain alternative materials and expertise to build a healthy home.

The guide is comprehensive and highly authoritative, as its authors are a green architect, an indoor environmental consultant and an environmental medical doctor. Included are 15 essays by leading building biologists.

Many of the chemicals used in building products have been associated with a variety of illnesses. Exposure to toxins in the indoor environment have been linked to everything from sinus infections and headaches to full-blown chemical sensitiv-



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ity and other immune system disorders.

Since this awareness has spread, safer materials and better methods of design are now becoming available, building and rating and certification programs have been created and government environmental guidelines have emerged to encourage the building of healthier homes. However, there is still a lot of false or concise information on the subject so it is up to homeowners to educate themselves with books like *Prescriptions for a Healthy House*.

There are two approaches to addressing the indoor pollution dilemma, according to the authors. Firstly, as many pollutants should be eliminated as possible and an airtight barrier created inside so there is less concern about the chemical composition of structure and insulation. Secondly, the houses should be constructed of natural or non-toxic materials vapor diffusible or breathable.

Concerns about the cost of building a healthy home are also addressed in *Prescriptions for A Healthy House*. How much

does it cost? "Between zero and 25 percent more than standard construction," say the authors, but there are many things that can be done to build and maintain it that require little or no money, from additive-free concrete to zero-VOC paints. Other methods that cost something initially, but save money in the long run, include less toxic roof systems and gas-fired hydronic radiant floor heating.

The authors divide indoor air pollutants into five different categories and thoroughly explain what they are and where they come from – volatile organic compounds, combustion by-products, pesticides, electromagnetic fields and naturally occurring pollutants such as radioactive contaminants, heavy metals, biological pollutants such as pollen, house dust and mould.

The strategies for creating a healthy home correspond in the book with the format frequently used by residential contractors. Information is presented on designing for health; climate-based construction detailing, reducing toxic emissions through choice of building materials; quality

control measures during construction and maintaining an ongoing healthy home environment through education.

Homeowners will learn about Material Safety Data Sheets, how to select the right home site and alternatives to frame construction. They will become oriented about sustainably harvested wood, environmentally-friendly countertop materials and membrane roofing. Addressed also are issues associ-

ated with doors and windows, flooring, carpeting and various finishes. Water treatment and plumbing, heating and cooling, electrical field management and environmental testing are also covered.

In other words, the book is a vital and intelligent resource for not only homeowners or those considering building a house but also professionals in the home construction business.

■ DONA STURMANIS

How to Maintain a Healthy Home

Anthena Thompson, a certified Building Biology Practitioner, offers in the book some timely prescriptions that can be implemented immediately, which are summarized here:

Furniture: Old items can be replaced with new ones made of natural materials and fabrics without chemical treatments. If you can't afford this, vacuum your furniture and put it out in the fresh air and sunshine for a while. Clean it with a damp microfibre cloth and wash it with good old soap and water.

Laundry: Use healthy products with no fragrance. Hang it outside for a fresh smell.

Cleaning: Use non-toxic brands

or make your own (the book tells you how).

Vacuuming: Use a model that filters out allergens. Traditional vacuum cleaners omit and blow 70 per cent of dust back into the air.

Fragrance: Avoid all air fresheners made of chemicals or with aromas.

Bedding: Replace with organic wool pillows, duvets, and blankets that are naturally resistant to mites. Consider organic pillowcases, sheets and duvet covers made of organic cotton.

Read labels: Don't bring products into the house bearing warnings of danger or poison.



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PROFILE

Enthusiastic About Saskatchewan Developer sees sustainable neighbourhoods as key to future growth

Design is important to Natasha Kuperman, but when the developer talks about sustainability and growth, the discussion quickly turns to traditional concepts of community.

"I look at sustainability from a design perspective," says Kuperman. "I believe that good architectural design — good landscape and an eye to good site planning — really fosters sustainability."

Good design leads to integration, avoids excess and creates harmony, she explains.

"That's the century-old idea of sustainability, which Saskatchewan has in its very blood, its very nature," she says.

Kuperman doesn't get caught up in far-fetched, unproven green technology ideals. Her ideas have to be workable, creating places that people actually want to live in, and can afford. Sustainability doesn't have to be complicated.

"It exists already," she says. "It's just a matter of accentuating it and having the conscious-



ness to pick up on every level of sustainability.

"Murray Guy, the head of Integrated Designs, is a very good example of what I would call the ideal of sustainability. Saskatchewan born and bred, he understands how to be sustainable within the context of a very high consciousness population, and not costing some extraordinary sum or being foreign to the place, but just working with an educated understanding of existing materials."

Kuperman developed her interest in sustainable design while studying architecture at Cornell University. She entered

the US Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon, where college and university teams compete to design, build and operate the most attractive and energy-efficient solar-powered house. Kuperman's Cornell team narrowly missed taking first place in the 2005 competition, edged out by the University of Colorado. Armed with her bachelor of architecture degree, she now works as director of development and acquisitions at Macro Properties, a national real estate investment company based in Toronto.

Kuperman is spearheading Macro's development in Lang-

ham, called Tilia Meadows, a mixed commercial and residential neighbourhood on 85 acres on the east side of the town. The development is designed to preserve Saskatchewan's smalltown character while requiring all construction to meet green energy goals. Tilia Meadows will be a combination of low, medium and higher density housing, and Main Street and highway commercial lots. It's designed as a walkable neighbourhood. Light pollution standards make it dark sky friendly. Landscaping plans support local food production, community gardening and rainwater collection, as well as an urban forest. Incentives are in place for builders to adopt Energy Star, BuiltGreen and LEED standards.

"Our goals are to grow the community of Langham," says Kuperman. "I think Langham's a really unique community. It retains the essence that people from all over Saskatchewan feel most comfortable living in."

"I'm very interested in the impact of the individual home but only if it is part of sustainable community," she adds.

"I want to build strong communities, communities where every single age group is represented, communities which are specifically made for a Saskatch-

ewan identity. My aspiration is to come back to something I've developed decades before and seeing how alive and dynamic and useful it's become.

"Saskatchewan historically has been a place of opportunity," she says. "Saskatchewan has so much room to grow. I like to be in a place where there's room to grow."

Kuperman sees a bright future for Saskatoon. She's seen tremendous growth since Macro Properties invested in Saskatoon a decade ago, but thinks what we've seen so far is only the tip of the iceberg.

"I see huge, dynamic potential. It's also a place that has a history which is more sustainable in the towns and a certain

consciousness about high density downtown."

"I believe in urban areas," she adds. "I believe the best lessons of how things should work are learned organically in an urban area. Saskatoon is definitely an urban area that already has vibrancy. I love the work that Karl Miller of Meridian Development is doing, building on what's already here, building on principles. He knows inherently, because he's from here. And I'm going to learn from that. I'm going to learn from the people who are from here and building the place up and then see if I can contribute through partnerships or through my own initiatives."

"Having been to cities all over

the world, I can see that this is just the beginning. There's so much room to grow, in terms of seeing residential downtown, in terms of seeing more office buildings, more retail, more community involvement, more

spaces for a community to learn and to mix with one another. It's pretty exciting.

"A home is nothing without the community that surrounds it. That, I hope is my big contribution."

Developer Puts Sustainable Ideals Into Practice at Tilia Meadows

When Macro Properties' Natasha Kuperman set out to create a new neighbourhood in Langham, 20 minutes northwest of Saskatoon, she knew it had to become a sustainable community.

"We have long and extensive construction guidelines," she says.

Home builders must meet minimum standards for energy efficiency, site planning, waste management and landscape design.

In short, according to the developer's website, Tilia Meadows will feel like the kind of neighbourhood people used to grow up in: "It's developed around landscapes for kids to play in, pathways where you might pass a neighbour on an evening stroll, and a school and/or community centre."

The site plan includes passive solar orientation, shared public space, wide tree-lined boulevards and design mandates for energy efficiency.

Efficient Design:

■ Rebates for Energy Efficiency: Energy Star, BuiltGreen or LEED

■ Minimum R-value standards, set out in the design and construction agreement

Construction and Design:

■ Architectural controls to develop and protect a sense of integrity within the development, maintain property values and neighbourhood aesthetics, and gather people with shared sustainable values into a new community

Storm Water Management:

■ Continuous linear parks help manage storm water surface drainage
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PRACTICA

To Standardize or Personalize? New Home Design is a Matter of Commitment and Time

Will your dream home be a custom or standard design plan? A custom home builder works with the buyer to customize the design from the blueprint stage. A standard design or “spec home” is a completed home the buyer purchases as is. Jim Schultz of Selkirk Developments Inc. offers plans that start as standard designs and include a variety of customer changes.

“We build spec homes that are usually part way completed,” he says. “If the cabinets, wall colours or flooring have yet to be ordered, then customers can have a choice in these aspects.”

Standard house designs are geared to the preferences of the average home buyer. Several home and architectural styles are available and tend to include the more common features such as room dimensions, square footage, and layout. Floor or cabinet layout may be personalized, though the extent of alterations is limited to non structural features.

“Even with a standard home design there are modifications,”



he says. “Every house is a little different, from varying sized lots to floor plans. Not one is identical.”

The distinct difference of a custom plan is the involvement of the buyer in the design of the house. David Dyck, president of Rocy Homes Ltd. says the design team works with the customer to design a house that fits their lifestyle.

“Everything is specific to that client’s needs,” says Dyck. “The client makes the decision on every detail of the house.”

Custom planning is not for everyone, particularly if the buyer does not have the time to devote to the process. Dyck says a lot of time is needed for meeting with design team members and gaining the knowledge to make the decisions. Creating your own personal oasis can sometimes be grueling when

you are making decisions on preferences from electrical plug-in locations to custom fireplaces and mantles, cabinetry, and stairs. Ensuring your schedule can allow for this prolonged commitment will help make the experience more enjoyable.

Ron Olson, general manager of Boychuk Homes, says custom plan buyers are usually people who tend to be more demanding and know what they want, have the resources to choose the custom option and tend to be second, third or fourth home owners.

In most cases, it’s a matter of choice. However, taking the custom planning option sometimes may be a necessity, such as for specific environmental features or when addressing renovations to suit future change in lifestyle.

“If energy saving is a must, then the specs can reflect water

saving features such as hot water on demand,” says Olson. “I believe custom builders are on the leading edge of home building because customers are demanding such features.”

In terms of price, Olson says generally custom plans tend to be 5 to 10 per cent higher in price than standard plans and where it starts to get costly is in the features selected.

Dyck offers the analogy of buying a car. The vehicle starts at a basic price but the price increases with each option added. The custom plan gives the buyer flexibility of design, complete control on features, and a firm price.

Working together with the home builder on the stylistic and functional details in designing your living space brings satisfaction to the project because it reflects your personal taste in every aspect of the home.

No matter which planning option you take, Schultz notes that he has experienced extended delivery times from six to 12 months for a standard house plan in Saskatoon. With the non-standard features in a custom design and a deficit of skilled workers in many sub trades, it is advisable to plan diligently.

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STANDARDS

Architect or Designer-Builder? Choose the Right Professional for the Job

Hiring the right professional for a new home or a renovation project is critical to its success.

Yet, choosing between an architect and a designer-builder can be challenging. Much depends on the scope of the work; who can best help you accomplish your vision and goals?

Architects Undergo Rigorous Education and Examination

In Canada, the term architect is reserved for those licensed professionals who are registered with a provincially-based association. According to the Saskatchewan Association of Architects, there are three prerequisites: education, experience, and examination. Education is usually obtained by completing an undergraduate or graduate program in architecture. Experience is gained through the provincial Intern Architect Program. Successful completion of examinations is the final requirement for registration as an architect.

Licensing and registration is obtained through the provincial

architectural association. Architects are legally responsible for their work. Licensing and accreditation assures the public that those individuals calling themselves architects are qualified to practice architecture.

Provincial uniform building and accessibility standards, in addition to the national building code, require an architect to complete the design and design review of the building and building systems for buildings other than private residences.

Matt Johnston of Architecturally Distinct Solutions, an architectural firm and licensed builder, specializes in residential development. He explains that provincial building code stipulates architectural expertise on large industrial and commercial buildings. He works with clients who demand the same professionalism in their residential projects. Johnston has built a solid reputation for technical and practical proficiency — his firm handles all aspects from design and building to delivery. He argues that more complicated designs demand special training.

“Architects are taught the principles of materials, design, and budgets, ensuring that projects are built to design.”

Expert Designer-Builders Have Practical Training and Experience

Yet, judging by the number of local builder listings, a reserved title like architect is not a prerequisite for designing and documenting homes. It can be said that successful designer-builders remain long in the business through performance.

While architects may argue that builders lack the formal designation of a registered architect, it is reasonable to assume that designer-builders possess similar qualifications gained through practical training and experiential skill. In many cases, the only real difference is between those who have taken the provincial examinations and those who have not. In Saskatchewan, there is no requirement for designer-builders to be registered and there are generally no limitations to the scope of residential work that they can perform.

British Columbia designer-builder Anthony Yskes says most of his business comes through word-of-mouth referrals. Building can be stressful; his clients value trust and appreciate his hands-on approach. Like an onsite project manager, he provides a single point of

contact between clients and services over the duration. He has seen many demanding projects over his career. Typical of many builders, Yskes’ ability comes from experience, training, and natural talent. His resume suggests that no reasonable project exists beyond his reach.

Saskatchewan designer-builder Allan Ens of Homes by Ens started in the business in 1980, starting in residential construction.

“I started designing some of my own plans and I really enjoyed doing that,” he says. “It was an opportunity to value-add a product to our new business. It’s taken off from there.”

Ens finds that most people like to start by looking at previous designs, to get an idea of what they might be looking for. For example, the process helps them decide if they want a bungalow, bi-level or two-story house, then gets them thinking about the kind of budget they need.

From there, he designs the house to fit the client’s tastes.

“Everybody wants to make everything uniquely their own,” he says.

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Making the Professional Choice

Clearly, the consensus is that within the residential construction sector, architects and designer-builders are two variations of the same theme. In terms of work, both design and document architecturally-forward homes. Both oversee construction, manage budgets, and act on behalf of their clients.

However, there is no consensus regarding fees – there is no single formula. Both Johnston and Yskes agree that fees are a factor of scale. Yskes charges a percentage of the overall construction cost.

Johnston clarifies the misperception that architects automatically charge more for the same work. He differentiates between large commercial projects and residential building.

“By law, large projects require an architect’s expertise; rates are set through standard tariffs to cover a minimum of architectural services.”

Regarding single family homes, he says, “architects are very competitive.”

But whether an architect or a designer-builder is brought into the project, certain tasks need professional expertise.

“Part nine of the national building code, which covers residential housing, is pretty straightforward on what you can and cannot do,” says Ens. “As long as you follow that, and of course you have to understand how a house is going to get built in the first place and what’s going to work when you’re designing something and what’s not going to work, you just follow those codes and you’re fine.”

For example, the building code specifies when an engineer or other professional must be brought in.

How do you decide between an architect and a designer builder when it comes to designing your home? It is entirely subjective; it depends upon your instinct. Fortunately, Saskatoon is blessed with many accomplished architects and designer builders, each with their own signature style.

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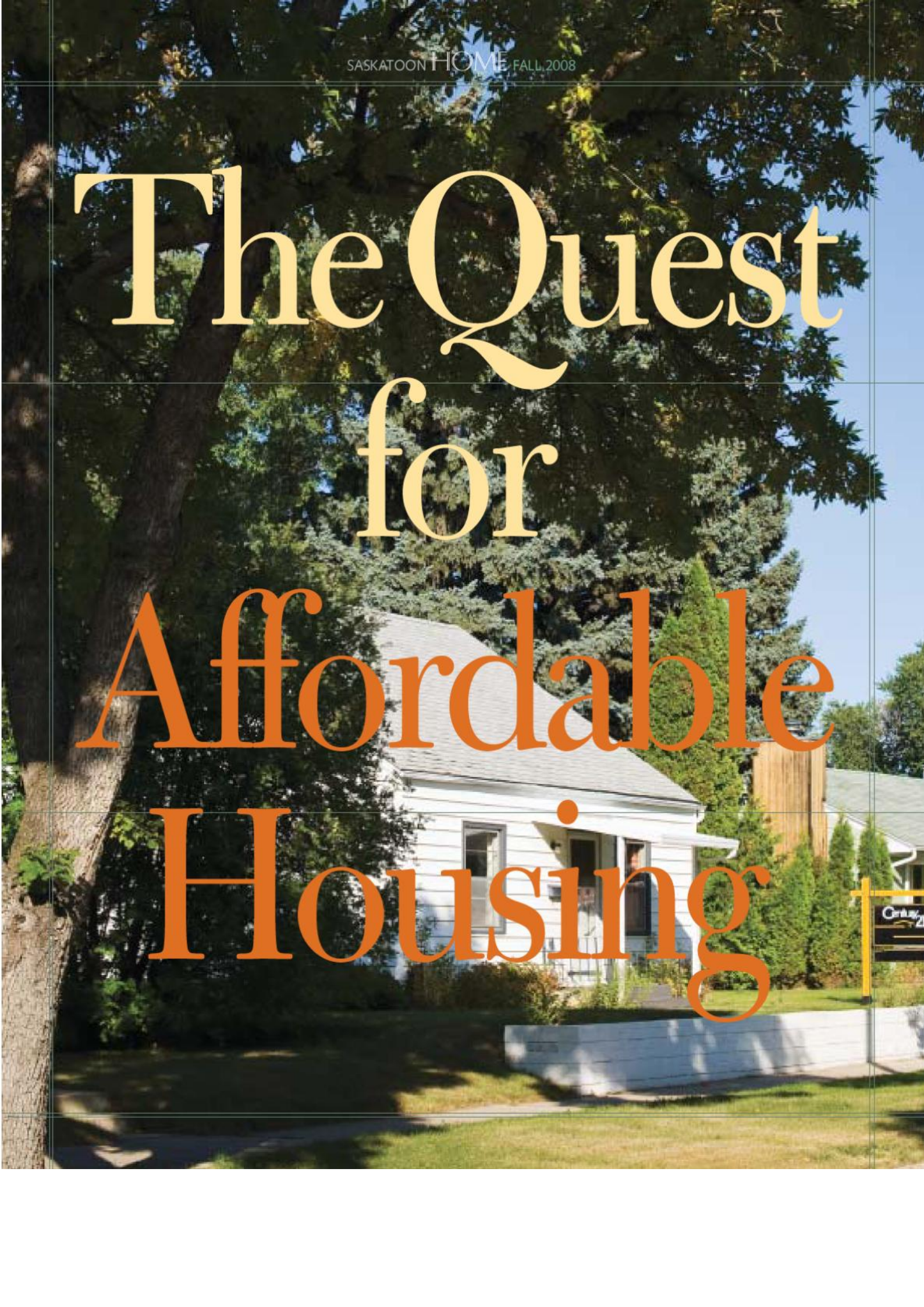
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SASKATOON HOME FALL 2008

The Quest for Affordable Housing



Dramatic changes are taking place in the Saskatoon home building environment

Dreaming of a Sustainable Future

WE USED TO JOKE THAT YOU COULD BUY A HOUSE IN SASKATCHEWAN WITH YOUR CREDIT CARD. IN SOME SMALL TOWNS, THAT WAS ALMOST LITERALLY THE CASE – IF NOT YOUR CREDIT CARD, THEN MAYBE A RED PAPER CLIP.

A decade ago in Saskatoon, housing prices may not exactly have been cheap, but they were certainly affordable. Back then, most people would have had no trouble finding a place to live that took between 10 and 20 per cent of their income – what economists refer to as the housing affordability measure.

Now, the average house in the city exceeds the average family's ability to comfortably pay for it. The affordability measure passed 30 per cent within the past year. Although rates in Saskatoon hovering around 40 per cent pale in comparison to places like Vancouver, where a standard bungalow or two-storey could snatch away nearly 80 per cent of your house-

hold income, it's still more than we've become accustomed to.

For well over half of families in Saskatoon, affordability is no laughing matter. The median household income in the city, \$49,313 as of the 2006 census, is barely half of what's needed to qualify for an average house now priced at \$292,000. Even those not in the market to buy need to live somewhere, and we've watched as rental rates in the city have marched upward in lockstep with property values. Half the families in the city could be considered as potential candidates for affordable or social housing assistance if they were suddenly to find themselves in need of housing, because they earn less than \$52,000 annually. By some

estimates, there is an immediate need for up to 5600 new, affordable housing units in the city. With nearly 85,000 households in Saskatoon, clearly most of us are adequately housed already, but for students moving to the city, those just starting out in their career, anyone looking for a place to live for a myriad of other reasons, affordability must be one of those top-of-mind concerns.

There are about a dozen private and non-profit agencies in Saskatoon that work toward providing affordable housing. We're unique in that our municipal government can play a meaningful role, as well. Besides addressing affordable housing issues, these groups are also working on providing entry level housing for first time homebuyers who have respectable incomes but for whom the cost of housing would still pose a struggle.

In response, we're seeing some novel and refreshing changes in the way our city grows. Suburban sprawl is giving way to more compact designs. New neighbourhoods are containing a greater proportion of multi-unit dwellings, such as stacked townhouses and street townhouses, in addition to detached homes.

Among the most innovative housing designs on the horizon is the growing interest in modular construction, where complete houses can be built in climate-controlled factory conditions and assembled on site at considerable savings in cost and time over conventional building techniques. Portions of neighbourhoods are being dedicated to different segments of the housing market,

not just affordable and entry level, but residential care homes as well. Obviously, these changes are not driven exclusively by affordability, but as housing prices rise, it's natural to see neighbourhoods develop more compactly.

A lot of the changes reflect a desire for the city to become more sustainable. Our newest neighbourhoods are designed with higher densities and include a broad mix of services in village squares or district villages. There's more green space. Environmental considerations are given more weight.

It's on the "green" front that we're seeing a tremendous amount of change in the city. Commercial developers are falling over themselves to build LEED-certified developments. A LEED for neighbourhood design is in the works. Neighbourhood densities are increasing, returning to traditional levels. Habitat for Humanity's Re-Store has never been busier, as home owners and renovators find ways to re-use and recycle building materials, fixtures and appliances.

Last but not least, the Green Building Council is holding the Build Saskatchewan Green sustainable building conference in Saskatoon. In just five years, this meeting of industry insiders has exploded into a public event, with HGTV's Mike Holmes delivering the keynote address. Excitement building over the conference has led to the creation of Green Week 2008, running the last week in October throughout Saskatchewan.

■ DARRELL NOAKES

Gimme



Saskatoon Learns New Ways to Make Housing Affordable

Shelter

We are the only city of our size that is a land developer. We're 50 per cent of the residential market. What that means is that we have a double benefit in that we're making money towards affordable housing.

In Saskatoon's sizzling economy, housing affordability takes on a whole new meaning. People who never worried about the cost of a roof over their heads before have begun to realize that affordability isn't just a problem for the poor or the disadvantaged.

A Royal Bank of Canada report on housing affordability published in March notes: "Saskatchewan is the new Alberta — holding the top spot nationwide on growth across all key housing indicators including housing starts, house prices, residential building permits and resale activity."

The "housing affordability measure" is the proportion of median pre-tax household

income required to service the cost of a mortgage, including principal and interest, property taxes and utilities. A housing affordability measure of 30 per cent is the generally accepted threshold for a family's ability to afford housing, whether that's in rent or mortgage payments, including utilities and other costs. Once you're spending more than 30 per cent on a place to live, you find that you've got less for food, clothing, transportation, education and other necessities. Discretionary spending is the first thing to go. The Royal Bank report predicted that even if house prices and mortgage rates were to dip during the summer,

Saskatonians could still expect to pay more than 30 per cent of their incomes on housing.

"If you're spending more than 30 per cent, you're living in housing that is beginning to put pressure on your life style and is consuming more of your disposable income," says Alan Wallace, manager of neighbourhood planning for the City of Saskatoon. "You're becoming 'house poor'."

When housing prices in Saskatoon were depressed, as they were for about two decades leading up to the economic boom we're enjoying now, it wasn't hard to find a place to live that took up less than 30 per cent of

your income. A decade ago, the housing affordability measure had declined to well below 20 per cent for single detached homes and was headed as low as nearly 10 per cent for townhouses and condominiums.

According to that Royal Bank report, the proportion of pre-tax household income needed to service the costs of owning a home in Saskatchewan now exceeds the affordability threshold. A standard townhouse now takes up about 34 per cent of an average income. A detached bungalow, the benchmark of Canadian style, consumes 40 per cent. A standard two-storey home, 42 per cent. The silver lining in this cloud is that a standard condominium suite, although more than double than in the past, still works out to about 26 per cent.

"The price has risen much, much faster than incomes," says Wallace. "In fact, last year it was an over 50 percent rise in the value of homes on average. It has been higher than that with some newer homes and lower than that in some areas of the city, but on average it's been a 50 per cent increase. No one has had a 50 per cent increase in their income.

"The other thing is, that puts pressure on rent," he adds. "If you're renting, you're not owning, you don't have the luxury of selling and moving. You basically must pay the rent. Rents started to rise and in some cases have risen dramatically."

In August, 2006, a gross annual income of \$48,000 was needed to purchase an average \$160,000 house, with 25 per cent down payment and 25-year mortgage. In August, 2007, income of \$70,800 was needed, as the price of an average house had risen to \$250,000. By July of this year, prospective buyers needed to be grossing \$87,600 annually as house prices rose to an average of \$292,000.

According to Saskatoon's Housing Business Plan, the situation is especially acute for

lone-parent families, working families, First Nations people, and single people. Other groups identified as more likely to have difficulty accessing suitable housing or to be at risk of homelessness were people with special needs such as women fleeing violence and those with mental illness or addictions. An emerging issue will be finding adequate housing choice for students, recent immigrants and visible minorities.

It would be hard to find anyone in the city who isn't aware of the pressure on rental housing. Vacancy rates plummeting below half a percent earlier this year consumed much of our city council's time. Sometimes entire council meetings were devoted to the crisis.

Saskatoon Serves Up Some Sheltering Solutions

"The supply is very, very tight," says Wallace. "The city's emphasis has been to increase supply and we've done everything we can. Working with the province, we've increased our incentives, we've created a new rental incentive program. We're trying to do everything we can to attract people to build new rental accommodation. We're giving rebates for secondary suite creation. We're looking now at the possibility of people being able to build garage suites above their garage and granny suites. Those kind of things are all affordability measures to increase the supply of housing, because as the supply goes up, then the prices start to moderate."

The city's business plan notes that housing is a "non-traditional role for most municipalities." Municipal governments such as Saskatoon do not build, own or manage housing. However, Saskatoon still has the means to influence the supply of affordable housing in the city. These include municipi-

pal incentives such as rebates. Unlike many other cities, we also have the ability to introduce "permanent affordable housing" for working families, thanks to the City's land bank and other investments.

The most immediate action the city can take is to offer money to attract property owners to add secondary suites, such as basement suites for students. The city can't pay people before they build, but it can offer rebates of certain expenses such as permit fees once the secondary suite is created.

"The province is offering an incentive, and we've tagged on with no permit fees," says Wallace. "Basically, the province will contribute half the cost up to \$24,000. The city will rebate all of your permit fees back.

"The other incentive which we hope will attract some attention is the rental rebate incentive," he adds. "If you're building a rental project anywhere in Saskatoon, we will give a \$5,000 grant (per suite), plus a five year tax abatement."

Garage suites, carriage houses and granny flats are one means to increase the supply of affordable temporary or rental accommodation. They have been a controversial subject in the past. In fact, a previous city council rejected a similar proposal to allow these types of development during the 1980s, a time when governments throughout North America were struggling to address an earlier crisis in housing, but a crisis that largely bypassed our prairie cities. Allowing secondary suites outside of a principle dwelling now would require bylaw amendments and zoning changes. Critics worry that these suites bring overcrowding, reduce privacy and diminish property values. Experience in other cities has tended to disprove these concerns, especially when suites are constructed as residences used for temporary accommodation of relatives and students.

"Many people don't want to have somebody living in the same dwelling – strangers

or relatives, it doesn't matter — but what they would prefer to do is use that vacant space above that big garage they've got," says Wallace. "We've got a lot of 40-foot by 27-foot garages in Saskatoon. You can convert some of that space into a garage suite, maybe as a second floor or something like that. It's been done in other centres. They look quite attractive, and they're certainly something we want to look at here as a potential low cost housing option for relatives or singles or students."

The City of Edmonton, for example, recently began allowing these types of secondary suites. To address citizens' concerns about privacy, the city introduced rules that limit the placement of windows and design standards that limit sight lines and screen buildings from view. In addition, the city requires these residences to be temporary, so that they could be removed after the tenant has left.

"Some of us are in sandwich generations, or sandwich families, where you've got kids you're looking after but you also have to look after your parents," says Wallace. "The best way to do that is to have them close to you but not maybe in the home. Maybe they don't want to live with you in the home, but still want to have proximity to you."

In the past, the alternative has been to move seniors into apartments, supported living or institutionalized settings.

Density Encourages Affordability

Another means to address affordability is to increase neighbourhood density. As the cost of land goes up, putting more dwelling units on the space spreads the cost among more people, so that costs for individuals become more affordable. In the past, high densities were the norm in urban areas. Saskatoon's earliest neighbourhoods, such

as Nutana and Caswell Hill, reflected the style of cities everywhere, with densities of about eight units per acre. Over the years, we've seen densities decline to less than five units per acre in some places, an unsustainable trend that contributes to urban sprawl, high infrastructure costs and transportation pressures, as well as reduced affordability. The pendulum is now swinging back the other way, as urbanites seek higher densities, not only for reasons of affordability, but also because of the social amenities that come from dense, vibrant neighbourhoods. Those that include a mix of multi-unit and single-unit dwellings have higher overall densities, while still providing space for households that prefer more space.

"You're going to see in all of our new neighbourhoods, starting with Willowgrove, Rosewood and Stonebridge, a larger density overall than our neighbourhoods have been in the past," says Wallace. "Briarwood is a stark example. You go through there, there's almost no multiples in that entire neighbourhood. That has a neighbourhood density of about five units an acre."

"Our new neighbourhoods now are pushing up to eight units per acre, which overall is quite a difference. You'll notice that right away. People accept it if it blends into the entire neighbourhood environment."

Modular Homes Mean More Affordable Homes

While increasing density helps improve affordability by addressing land and servicing costs, it doesn't have as much effect on building construction costs. As our land values have increased during the economic boom, the proportion of the value attributed to the building has dropped to the point where it's now about a third of the total cost of the property. Demand for housing and shortage of skilled labour are increasing the

amount of time it takes for new housing to come on-stream and pushing the cost of construction upwards. Affordable housing needs to deal with construction as much as it does with land.

Traditional construction methods, resulting in townhouses, stacked townhouses and apartments can produce good, affordable multi-unit housing by increasing the volume of living space. Recently, a new form of housing is beginning to spring from some non-traditional sources. Companies better known for supplying modular buildings for the oil patch, mining sector and construction industry are poised to make a significant contribution to the housing market, especially affordable single-unit dwellings. Traditional home construction costs about \$200 per square foot, while modular construction is able to bring costs down to about \$140 per square foot.

"You really can't build an affordable single family dwelling any more, unless it's modular," says Wallace. "These companies had traditionally built trailers for the mining industry and the construction industry. They have plants now that will put out houses. There's three of them in Saskatoon that I have visited, that look very impressive, but they're only now getting into affordable housing. They hold great promise for providing affordable single unit dwellings."

If the term modular conjures up images of mobile homes and trailer parks, think again. Modular homes are complete houses, as swank and impressive as any show home you've ever toured. Besides lowering construction costs, modular homes have advantages that come from being pre-built in climate-controlled factory conditions. The construction environment results in faster fabrication, allowing complete homes to be built in a couple of weeks and installed on-site within the month. They are built to precise and highly energy efficient specifica-

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- by Linda Epstein

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November 14-16 Saskatchewan Indemand

November 16 Santa Claus Parade



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December 5-7 Sundog Arts &

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tions, and often use less energy during construction than conventional building techniques. The modular components provide flexibility in design, so that even large homes can be shipped and assembled in any neighbourhood. A completed modular home is indistinguishable from any other home in the neighbourhood.

"We have a strong need for family accommodation right now," says Wallace. "This would be single parent families, as well, those who are struggling to make ends meet with a single income. Our concern is, as well, with the working poor. These are people who have jobs, who previously could afford homes, who can't now."

"These would be first time home buyers," he adds. "We'd like to focus some of the housing on entry level."

Entry level housing, Wallace explains, is housing made available for households whose incomes are too high to qualify for affordable or social housing, but who are unable to meet criteria for market housing.

"That's families earning between \$52,000 and, say, \$75,000 a year," says Wallace. "It's difficult for them to access housing in those price ranges as well, especially when you're supporting a family. We'd like to see more entry level built. Entry level income is a growing concern for the city."

Partnership Provides Proactive Solutions

Currently, there is a need for at least 3500 affordable housing units in Saskatoon, according to municipal data. The health region has estimated that up to 5600 new dwellings are needed. The city's housing business plan aims double the current rate of construction of affordable housing units.

"Council directed us to revise the affordable housing business plan," says Wallace. "What council is relying on us to do to is to

get 500 new units of affordable housing built every year. Our traditional amount of affordable housing built each year has been around 200 to 250 units. What they'd like to see is an environment where we're building 500 units a year."

The city currently doesn't build housing directly. It works closely with builders. Organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Cress Housing operated by the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Quint Development Corporation, Central Urban Metis Nation, City Centre Community Renewal Initiatives, Saskatoon Downtown Youth Centre (EGADZ), Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership and the Affordable New Home Development Foundation work directly to provide affordable housing in Saskatoon.

"There are many, many affordable housing providers in Saskatoon," says Wallace. "We're also trying to engage the for-profit sector. We're working with the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders Association on a variety of affordable housing initiatives."

"The City of Saskatoon has not provided housing, but there's a model out there. It's based on a land trust. Affordable housing providers know all about land trusts, but the model the city is considering is a little different twist. Our housing corporation would allow people a long term lease, even a life lease, and let them build equity in their affordable home. They would have the ability to take some of that equity with them into the marketplace. It's a bridge between renting and owning. It's like a land trust, in that the city would own the land and we would own the housing, would have the housing built or would acquire it in some way. That would be any form of housing, single or multiple, and we would run it as a housing corporation."

"It would be owned by the city, run by a board, like the Mendel Art Gallery or the Credit Union Centre. It would be arms

length from city council. And it would have its own administration."

The proposal is currently on the drawing board while a financial feasibility assessment is conducted by an independent auditing firm. If the proposal gets the go-ahead, it would make Saskatoon unique in its ability to address affordable housing issues, thanks largely to the way the city has managed its land for the past 70 years.

"It's permanent affordable housing," explains Wallace. "It's housing that will never be released into the marketplace, because we own it. What sometimes happens with affordable housing is the governments will contribute to the construction of affordable housing, which initially starts out that way, but then once it becomes part of the marketplace, it's not affordable any longer."

"The one area where we're most fortunate, is that we're a land developer, whereas most cities are not," he adds. "Being a land developer, we are experiencing large growth and large revenues from our developments in Willowgrove and Hampton Village, and we sell commercial land as well. A small percentage of that, \$2.5 million a year, is taken from that land activity and put into the affordable housing reserve. So, there's absolutely no draw on the taxpayer, no draw on the mill rate to do affordable housing in Saskatoon. That's a really strong benefit for Saskatoon."

"That's unique to Saskatoon, in the country. If anyone is bringing money into affordable housing, they're likely doing it from their general revenues. We are the only city of our size that is a land developer. We're 50 per cent of the residential market. What that means is that we have a double benefit in that we're making money towards affordable housing. We also have a land base where we can pre-designate land specifically for affordable housing."

Saskatoon's Housing Business Plan: Highlights

New First Home Ownership Program

- introduce opportunities for individuals and families with low to moderate incomes to enter the housing market, including single and multiple-unit dwellings such as townhouses
- identify suitable locations in new City-owned neighbourhoods, including Willowgrove, Hampton Village and Blairmore Suburban Centre
- encourage the private developers to implement the program in all privately-owned neighbourhoods

New Zoning District for Entry Level and Affordable Housing Developments

- create a new zoning district designed specifically for entry level and affordable housing to be applied within new and existing neighbourhoods
- encourage "grow homes" (part of the house is left undeveloped, then completed by adding or moving interior partitions as the family or household changes over time) and stacked townhouses

Development Bonuses

- introduce a bonus provision in the zoning bylaw for inclusionary affordable housing developments

Permanent Affordable Housing

- create a new non-profit organization to administer a land trust that secures dwelling units (leased) protected from the influence of the open market
- provide "entry level" housing targeted toward moderate income individuals and families
- fills the gap between social housing and market housing

Disposable City-owned Land

- offer disposable City-owned land to affordable housing providers through the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership

Priority Review for Affordable Housing

- priority review of building, development and plumbing permit applications results in earlier review of affordable housing developments, especially during times when application volumes are high

Review of Granny, Garage & Carriage Suites

- investigate the feasibility of permitting the construction of granny, garage, and carriage suites, to allow secondary suites that provide housing for students and relatives

New Neighbourhood Design Standards

- encourage all developers of major residential infill projects and new neighbourhoods to adopt a more inclusive approach
- standards have been developed, together with new infrastructure standards, to provide more flexibility for developers and help keep costs of land servicing as low as possible

Innovative Housing Incentives Policy

- revised in 2007, this program increases the City's capital contribution from five percent to 10 percent of the total capital cost of affordable housing projects to a maximum of \$2.5 million per year

Incentives for Secondary Suites

- rebate permit fees for home owners who add secondary suites
- helps improve the market for student housing

Five Year Tax Abatement for Affordable Rental Housing

- offers a five-year tax abatement for non-profit rental or co-op affordable housing projects anywhere in the city

Support for Housing Business Plans

- proposal to provide core funding for an affordable housing resource within the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership

Downtown Housing Incentives Policy

- goal of 10,000 residents for the downtown within the next 20 years
- development incentives to encourage residential development include property tax abatements on the incremental value of new construction, conversion projects or renovation of restricted residential projects
- incentives apply to market and below market housing

Municipal Enterprise Zone Policy

- development incentives to property owners and prospective businesses within the geographic boundaries of the Zone (West Industrial, Pleasant Hill, King George, Riversdale, Westmount, Caswell Hill, Mayfair, and Kelsey-Woodlawn areas).
- incentives include rebate of building, development, plumbing permit fees, and may also include property tax abatements, grants in lieu of tax abatement, rebates of off-site development charges, rebate of environmental screening charges, land assembly, rebate of development plan amendment fees including advertising, rebate of rezoning fees including advertising, rebate of discretionary use fees, and rebate of subdivision fees



Why living closer together might make us
more sustainable, healthier and happier

Density by Design

As of late, when we hear the terms *sustainable* and *sustainability*, most times we're referring to environmental sustainability. These terms have pretty much become synonymous with reducing our carbon footprint. However, sustainability has two other critical facets we'd do well to recognize.

S.E.E.: A formula for a foreseeable future

This acronym summarizes the three components of sustainability: Social, Economic, and Environmental.

Let's stay with the environmental discus-

sion for a moment. In addition to preserving and protecting ecosystems and natural habitats, the two largest and most significant components related to environmental sustainability are buildings and transportation.

The building initiative is straightforward. Let's re-use buildings and recycle components of buildings that we demolish. Let's be smart about how much energy goes into constructing new buildings; let's focus on materials and building systems that optimize renewable energy sources in both the capital and operating phases of a building's lifecycle. Well-executed site design can re-

duce storm run-off and reduce heat island effects. This, to my mind, is exciting stuff and bodes well for our future.

On the transportation side, it appears new technologies could reduce the reliance on fossil fuels. Hybrid cars and bio-fuels are already on the market.

But it doesn't matter how impressive new technologies are for personal transportation; we can't afford to use land the way that we currently do.

Current land use patterns are highlighted by follies. We need to make more efficient use of land. We must also look to more compact urban form, reducing the number of

trips that individuals and households make in the course of everyday living. There are social, economic, and environmental benefits of doing so.

Compact urban form is environmentally sustainable.

By accommodating the same number of people on a smaller urban footprint, pressure for expansion of municipal boundaries is reduced. This in turn means natural and agricultural lands can continue to thrive. As well, we can then realize densities that not only make it possible for people to walk and bicycle to their destinations, we can make public transportation a viable option. With fewer vehicles on the road, there would be fewer emissions and effluents to foul our air and water. Compact urban form is therefore environmentally sustainability.

Compact urban form is economically sustainable.

Auto-dependent land hosts not only low-density residential development, but also big box retail and any form of commercial use that devotes a large portion of a site to surface parking, increases the cost of the infrastructure necessary to serve *all* land uses. By spreading houses and businesses farther apart, the cost of providing water lines, storm and sanitary sewer pipes, electrical power, natural gas, police and ambulance services, and roads — including winter sanding and street cleaning and signage — all increase. These are not only the



Buildings should be reused and when demolished, their components recycled.

initial or capital costs, but also the maintenance costs.

This land use pattern means that a considerable chunk of all municipal budgets goes to providing and maintaining infrastructure. I don't want to give the impression that new development doesn't pay any of the costs of infrastructure to service itself because that isn't true.

In fact, in Saskatoon, it pays all of it; no costs of development are covered by the mill rate. Other cities aren't so lucky, where at least a portion of the costs is paid by the taxpayer.

Developers also do not pay the costs of other services, that come under pressure as communities grow, such as libraries, recreational and cultural services.

New technologies could reduce the reliance of cars on fossil fuels.



Another way of looking at this scenario is that low density land use also means a loss of revenue to municipalities. The logic is as follows: land assessments within a municipality generate tax revenue. By requiring more roads on which to drive, and more lots on which to park, we create more land area that isn't taxable. Fully 50% of the land area in any municipality is set aside for movement

and parking of vehicles, just to give some idea of how much space is non-taxable.

Why not consider an alternative pattern where less land area is used to service vehicle needs? The result would cost less to serve the same population. That is, compact urban form is more efficient from a revenue and service point of view.

The high price of low-density land use.

Every dollar spent on servicing a low-density lifestyle is a dollar that can't be spent on some other service that might be of greater value to the community. For example, healthcare. A dollar spent on another road is a dollar that isn't available to spend on a library, a wetland reclamation, or more community policing services. This is what economists call "opportunity cost."

At least part of the reason we've ended up in a low-density spending situation is the market system. Many of the costs of low-density land use are hidden. They're not out-of-pocket costs paid directly by the consumer; rather, some of the costs are buried in the taxes we pay.

Normally, consumers make

decisions about how much of a good or service to buy based on its price. They ask how much it will cost and how much of it they can afford. But economic theory assumes all costs are accounted for in the price of the good or service. In the case of low-density land use, all costs are *not* accounted for in the purchase price, and the consumer doesn't pay the full cost.

What happens when the price is artificially low? The consumer consumes more of that good or service than if they were required to pay the full price. What I'm saying is that any municipal infrastructure required to serve new low-density residential development, or auto-oriented commercial development is being subsidized by taxpayers.

These costs are not just those of subsidizing infrastructure, but also the environmental costs of, for example, loss of habitat or natural features in a community, visual blight, poor air quality, increased stress and loss of productivity due to time spent driving, increased obesity and diabetes as a result of suburban-oriented lifestyles, and more.. These costs are often unquantifiable and therefore we tend to ignore or downplay their significance.

The market mechanism has been fooling us. If we recognized the full price of low density land use, we'd be behaving much differently, meaning we'd be driving less and making more efficient use of land, both as households and as a society. Part of the problem, then, is not just that we use land inefficiently, but in doing so, we're unaware that the choice we're making is misinformed and that



Low density land use means a loss of revenue to municipalities.

we might be foregoing other choices that have more value.

To the extent that higher-density urban form makes more efficient use of dollars spent on roads and utilities infrastructure, and minimizes a number of social and environmental costs, we can therefore say that it is economically sustainable. It means costs associated with low-density land use don't consume a disproportionate share of tax dollars, thereby precluding the provision of other services to the community.

High-density urban form is related to social sustainability.

Social sustainability is a bit more complex to understand. I don't have a ready defini-

tion. You might have heard the term "social capital" which I'm going to take as meaning the same thing.

When does a community have social capital and what does that mean?

An elementary explanation is that social capital means people are connected through a myriad of networks. People know people. Through these networks, whether it's your service club,

your children's school, your church, or people you've come to know because you walk your dog in your neighbourhood, these connections offer many positive benefits. These include finding a good price on a product because someone told you about it, finding a job because someone told you about it, a visit from someone when you were sick, a senior who gets to stay longer in her house because neighbours help take care of her yard — the list goes on. Social capital means community.

The benefits of social capital are that they create societies that are more tolerant and stable, with lower costs for many services typically delivered by government. These costs include policing and health care. Social capital also means a sense of attachment

to a community and a caring for the general welfare of its inhabitants. It can also mean greater creativity within a population, greater resilience and ability to adapt to change.

In theory, social capital means greater psychological health for an urban population. It's the ability to attain and maintain this health for all citizens over the longer-term that I call social sustainability.

Land devoted to box stores and parking increases costs of serving all land uses.



Steps towards fostering greater social capital and social sustainability.

Interestingly, urban densification is consistent with this notion of social sustainability. Coming into contact with more people on a daily basis would seem to suggest an opportunity to create more social networks.

From an urban designer's perspective, we need to look to creating opportunities for people to interact. Certainly, zoning that allows significant densities is necessary to create thriving urban centres. However, high quality public space is also important. We need to create spaces that promote interaction and familiarity and that make people feel physically and psychologically comfortable. We can't do this until we agree not to let cars dominate public streets.

Project for Public Spaces, a non-profit organization based in New York, actively promotes livable urban environments. Check out the website at www.pps.org. This group says that meaningful public space is the most important ingredient in achieving a successful city. International Making Cities Livable (www.livablecities.org), a similar organization devoted to creation of humane urban environments, highlights the importance of public space, noting that a civic life is essential to the well-being of a community. It points to the role of public space in the socialization of children and young people — the place where social values are communicated and there is inclusiveness and a high tolerance for varying values and lifestyles.



Zoning that allows significant densities is necessary to create thriving urban centres.

These spaces are modeled after traditional European cities where commerce, particularly food and drink, play a key role — where the focus isn't on consumption, but on socialization. North American malls are in fact the antithesis of this model as is any auto-oriented lifestyle.

In a perfect world, less tax would be spent on funding roads, utility infrastructure and environmental clean-up and more would be spent on creating livable public space, that is, on urban design. Higher quality exterior finishes, public art, landscaped boulevards and street trees are just a few of the components of highly functioning public space that can be achieved by compact urban form.

Combined with higher residential densities that result from compact urban form,

well-designed, decently-funded public spaces become the life-blood of the community, pulsing with activity, passion, creativity, and a sense of self-worth in an often confusing world.

The holistic urban environment is the key to the future.

I maintain that there's a bigger picture than that of environmental sustainability and green design. And that big picture is called quality of life. I don't mean to downplay the importance of environmental initiatives in saying that. There's an opportunity to expand the notion of sustainability beyond the purely environmental to achieve more holistic urban environments, environments that see the individual as more than a biological entity within a physical ecosystem; environments that address the spiritual and psychological needs of their inhabitants; environments that nurture strong social bonding, attachment to community, and sense of place. In this vision, economic and social sustainability go hand in hand with environmental sustainability.

■ PATRICK MCORMICK, a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan, works in municipal government. He has undergraduate degrees in business and economics and a Master's degree in architecture. He considers urban design to be a discipline where planning and architecture merge; where the prime focus should be on the creation of a meaningful public realm that promotes human interaction, understanding, and cultural expression.

High quality public space promotes interaction and makes people feel comfortable.





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Frank Lloyd Wright Inspired Renovations Transform Saskatchewan Crescent Residence

THE WRIGHT STUFF

The large, sunken living room opens onto the terraced patio, facing the riverbank. The space is perfect for elegant entertaining, allowing guests to mingle from terrace, to living room, to dining room and through the kitchen.

As Betty Ann and Wade Heggie guided us through their Saskatchewan Crescent home, it soon became apparent that if any house in Saskatoon had stories to tell, this would be one of them. Through extensive renovation through the 90s, it's morphed into a handsome Prairie Style dwelling with reminiscent, updated touches of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Most of the elements of the house reflect Frank Lloyd Wright's style, but in different eras, says Betty Ann. The columns were inspired by his earlier works. Wallpapers are reproductions of his later collections.

"We didn't want to recreate Frank Lloyd Wright," she says. "We wanted to bring Frank Lloyd Wright into the next century."

"We wanted something where people could be in the dining room, flow to the living room and flow to the outside. We like to entertain. We've had dinners and dances on the front terrace. We've had a lot of fun with it.

"This is a house that belongs to Saskatoon," she adds with a laugh. "Everybody's got an experience in it."

It's a tradition carried on. Many people associated with the house have been well-



Wade and Betty Ann Heggie's Prairie Style home on Saskatchewan Crescent began as a 1950s ranch style bungalow. The renovation received an Architectural Masonry Award of Excellence in 2000. Architect/Designer: Edwards and Edwards Architects.

Engineer: Sawchuk Antonini Engineering Ltd. General Contractor: Hill Construction Ltd. Masonry Contractor: Hagblom Brick and Block Ltd.

known and well-respected, with strong roots in the city. Many of Saskatoon's most prominent citizens have socialized there. When the Heggies called architect Bill Edwards to ask about renovating the house, he fondly remembered playing pool in the basement recreation room, now used as an office.

This home was built by A.A. Murphy in 1952, an electrical engineer, who in 1911, was a partner in the firm which later became UMA Engineering; he was also a broadcasting pioneer who founded CFQC radio in 1923 and CFQC television in 1954.

The 2600 square foot ranch-style bungalow, designed by a Vancouver architect, was set well back on the lot, leaving a large, prestigious front lawn facing the river.

The house was later owned by Murphy's son, Bill, and then by Urban Donlevy, founder of Mercury Printers, and his wife, Helen.



In 1996, Betty Ann and Wade Heggie bought the bungalow and commissioned architect Bill Edwards to renovate the property. The dramatic re-vamp were completed in 1998.

"When we purchased the house we felt that it was a long ways back on the lot, and we wanted to capitalize on the view, so we built out closer to the river," says Betty Ann.

The extensive renovation expanded the house to 3400 square feet, reflecting the Prairie School style of architecture made famous by Frank Lloyd Wright.

"We added a fair bit of space in front of the house," says Edwards. The new design added a sunken, front living room area, a new entry portico and a closed-in porch area in front of the redesigned master bedroom. Interior partitions were cleared away to create a spacious, open atmosphere.

It was a bold move for the 1990s, creating an open concept that flowed through the

kitchen, dining room and living room, then into the outdoors. The architect created an axis flowing between the front and the back doors of the house, and a couple of crossaxes on the house circulation.

"It's very Prairie School," says Edwards. "Betty Ann loved that style, and we were fairly articulate in understanding it and using that language. That was not an uncommon occurrence in a Frank Lloyd Wright house. The great room concept kind of skipped a few generations. You see it coming back now."

"It had some classical style to it in the stonework," he adds. "It didn't have all the detailing, stylization and planning that a Frank Lloyd Wright house has; the way we articulated the roof, the large overhangs, the broad eaves and the modulation of the windows and the upper clear storey glass and the various heights of windows. Plus, just the way you approach the house, instead of

The kitchen was expanded to fill the original dining room. The open design allows natural morning light to flood the space. The elevated glass counter top serves as an eating area or buffet line.

Morning sunlight floods the kitchen with warmth. The work area features a curved table that can serve as a desk or rolled into the dining room. The bench beneath it can also be moved.



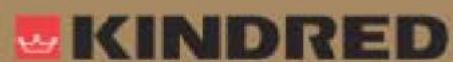
walking straight up to it, you notice you turn three or four times before you get to the front door.”

The Heggies also wanted the renovation to reflect their travels and interest in feng shui. It’s a marvellous blend of Asian and Midwest, creating a tasteful and elegant interior that uniquely captures the personalities of the owners while preserving the warmth and historical character of the home, and true to the organic nature of Frank Lloyd Wright’s designs.

The interior features long views, balanced by curves. There is also a balance of natural and crafted materials, including slate flooring from China, maple floors and cupboards,

and cherry, maple and mahogany custom furniture. Mahogany wall panelling from the original bungalow still finishes the walls. The dolomite limestone of the exterior was preserved as an interior finish. A pair of Manitoba Tyndall stone columns frame the space opened by the removal of a large picture window in the former living room.

“We were in an era when a bit of fun stuff was introduced into architectural design,” says Edwards. “They (the columns) may not exactly be a Frank Lloyd Wrightian thing, but we had to put something in to carry the roof. They became kind of a tongue-in-cheek feature, a little fun.”



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PREVIEW

Evolving Evergreen Sustainable Village to Grow Naturally

Out on the northeastern edge of the city, Saskatoon's newest neighbourhood is about to take shape on the horizon – and it's going green.

Evergreen, modelled as a sustainable urban village neighbourhood, will comprise 655 acres in the northeast corner of the city, in the University Heights Suburban Development area.

"We're continuing along the path of creating neighbourhoods with a sense of place," says Land Branch senior planner Derek Thompson, who is the principal designer of the Evergreen neighbourhood. He was also the principal designer of the Willowgrove neighbourhood.

To develop that sense of place, Thompson starts by establishing a village square surrounded by neighbourhood commercial and retail services. It's a similar concept to what has already been applied in Willowgrove. It's also one that most Saskatoon residents should already find familiar.

"What we're hoping to achieve in Evergreen is to achieve a little slice of the Broad-

way District in a suburban neighbourhood," says Thompson. "We've been successful in getting a neighbourhood commercial zone that will force the buildings facades out to the sidewalk edge with the parking behind the buildings and on the street. We've widened the streets around the village square so that we can accommodate angle parking which helps to create more of a pedestrian and vehicular integrated place – kind of a focal point within the neighbourhood."

The commercial district is surrounded by higher density residential units including street townhouses, a more modern

application of traditional row housing.

"We try to create the neighbourhood like a city would naturally evolve, with the centre of it being like the downtown which has a little bit higher density and more of an urban life style," says Thompson. "When you get out to the fringes you have the big pie shaped lots, the crescents and the cul-de-sacs containing a lower density housing environment."

Overall, the density of the Evergreen neighbourhood is expected to be around eight units per acre, about what you'd find in someplace like Nutana or Caswell Hill, says Thompson.

By contrast, density of a typical suburb in most cities is much less than five units per acre. It doesn't seem like a lot, but it makes a big difference in how sustainable a neighbourhood becomes.

"If you look at the plan, it doesn't look like it's going to be that dense," says Thompson. It's all in the way you design the interface between housing forms, he says. It's possible to build higher densities, while still giving people who like lower densities the kind of life style they like.

"The beauty of an urban village type of neighbourhood is that you do offer a variety of





housing forms. Interestingly enough, when you offer a variety of housing forms, you inevitably offer an entire life cycle of housing forms.

“Let’s say you get out of university and get your first job, you

might buy an apartment condominium. When you make a bit of money and get married or have a partner you may want to step up to a townhouse. Then, when you have children, you might want to upgrade into a

larger house. And so on, then downsize when you’re an empty nester.”

The development has even designated up to three lots per phase for residential care homes, says Thompson.

In addition to the village centre, Evergreen will also contain a district village near the northeast corner, off McOrmond Road. In a different time and place, this feature might be a sprawling shopping mall or big

Evergreen: Sustainable Neighbourhood

The Concept:

- Sustainable urban village residential neighbourhood.
- Variety of housing types: single family homes, multi-unit street and group townhouses, affordable and entry level housing, residential care homes.
- Village centre: town square with commercial and retail de-

- velopment to provide a central destination point for the community
- District village: shopping centre providing retail and business opportunities for Evergreen and future neighbourhoods, plus institutional (e.g. banks) and high-density housing
- Location: northeast side of the city, in University Heights

- area, east of Silverspring and Saskatoon Forestry Farm, north of Agriculture Canada research lands
- Area: 655 acres
- Green space: more than 42 acres of open space and linear parks, multi-use trails and unique green bridge
- Estimated population: 12,774

- Time line: concept plan, fall 2008; public consultations, fall and winter 2008-2009; city council review, early 2009; site preparation, spring 2009; lot sales for the first phase, fall 2009

SOURCE:

“Proposed Evergreen Concept Plan,” City of Saskatoon.

box development. Thompson says that to make it function as part of the community, it needs to be integrated into the neighbourhood.

In most suburban shopping districts, the buildings face inward and their stark, featureless rear walls present a barrier that faces the entry roads. For the Evergreen district village, the land will be subdivided so that at the perimeter there will be a row of small storefronts facing the street. On-street parking will provide easy access to the shops. Zoning would allow residential space above the commercial properties on the street. Larger stores will be behind, facing inwards as the public is accustomed to experiencing, but the design will allow the district village to present a more welcoming face to the public.

"When you come in on the road to the district village, it will look like Broadway," says Thompson.

The neighbourhood will be tied together by parks, green space, linear parks and a trail network.

"We've got the same as Willowgrove," he says, "but we took it a step further in that we're preserving two rows of approximately 50-year-old Scots pine that used to be part of the Forestry Farm and we're building linear parks around them. We're preserving the natural features of the neighbourhood."

A very different feature is the

Ward 10 Councillor Excited by Public Desire for Sustainable Neighbourhoods

There's a growing public expectation that future neighbourhoods are going to have to be more sustainable than they have been in the past, says city councillor Bev Dubois, whose Ward 10 includes the upcoming Evergreen neighbourhood.

"It's no different than people expecting us to build LEED-standard buildings or recycling (facilities)", she says.

Dubois sounds excited about the village square concept underpinning Evergreen.

"It's a good gathering place for people," she says. "Creating a neighbourhood, including schools, community centres and other facilities and services, helps build community, she says.

"There are four more new neighbourhoods that will eventually be developed and planned as evergreen is now," says Dubois.

"What we're looking at is an area that's going to be really, really, growing in huge numbers over the next 50 years or 60 years or so.

"It's pretty exciting. I'm looking forward to having another new neighbourhood."

"green bridge" that joins the green space and connects the two halves of the neighbourhood across McOrmond Drive. Rather than create a narrow, steep concrete and steel pedestrian overpass or culvert-style underpass, the designer wanted to maintain the continuous, graceful flow of the linear park. The green bridge rises gently up and over the arterial road and then down the other side.

The concept is like the landscaped wildlife crossings in Banff National Park.

"That was where we got the idea," says Thompson. "We haven't done the detailed design for it yet, but that's our vision for it. We don't know how wide it's going to be, but we are determined that the greenery and the shrubs and the plantings from the linear park will continue up over McOrmond Drive with the

trail system."

On the west, the trail network and linear park system connect with Silverspring. At south, a trail network will complement access along Lowe Road, providing access to the soccer centres and beyond.

"This is a holistic neighbourhood design. You can't get everything, but you try to maximize

everything that you can within the context that exists today. Good planning looks to the future."

"It's actually a village," says Thompson, who notes that he spent his formative years in half a dozen villages in Germany, France and Belgium. "I know it's not going to be a village like the ones I grew up in, in Europe, but it's a village."

"I think it was a natural way for an urban designer who designs neighbourhoods to start his life."

As plans currently stand, the Evergreen village will be developed over 15 years in six planned phases, starting in the south near Lowe Road and close to Silverspring, then working clockwise. The phasing strategy takes into account the rate of servicing, socio-economic conditions and market pressures. The first ground is expected to be broken this fall and the first lots for sale by next fall.



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THE CITY



Build It and They Will Come River Landing Brings Events and Crowds to the Waterfront

Build it, and they will come. A movie cliché to be sure, but certainly one that is applicable to the popular River Landing redevelopment in downtown

Saskatoon. While the Phase I river front pathway was opened in 2007, major amenities, including the amphitheatre and children's water play feature, were officially opened to great fanfare on June 20th, 2008. Early numbers from the Meewasin Valley Authority are encouraging. In July, pedestrian counts indicate that the area ex-

perienced a 51 per cent jump in activity – from 32,364 users per month in 2007 to 50,592 in 2008.

Saskatoon mayor Don Atchison noted that from the incredible Bridging 125 Celebration in 2007, to the recent Saskatoon Fireworks Festival, the development is serving its role in attracting special events.

Children enjoying the inaugural "dip" into the newly opened waterplay feature in River Landing. Photo: Sasha Goddard, City of Saskatoon.

"There are people who have lived their whole lives in Saskatoon, but haven't been to the river's edge," Atchison said. "River Landing has provided the kind of access to the river and attractions that have people

rediscovering their beautiful river valley.”

It's the kind of opportunity that some groups have been looking for – and have taken full advantage of. The Saskatchewan Craft Council recently moved their popular Waterfront Craft Art Festival to the back shore portion of the site, closing off the newly extended Spadina Crescent East to accommodate their many colourful booths and pavilions. Organizers were very pleased with the response – visitations were up 240 per cent from the previous year. Next year's event promises to be even bigger and better.

A trip to River Landing is now not complete without a visit to Prairie Fare. To serve the



Local artist Hans Holtkamp addresses the crowd during the unveiling of "The Founders".

entrepreneurs who offer an incredible menu using locally grown produce. Prairie Fare is a concession restaurant offering everything from hot dogs to delicious meat pies – not to mention lattes, cappuccinos, and ice cream.

Adding to the experience at River Landing, the City unveiled significant outdoor public art features including Launch Time, Cut out in

Time, and The Founders – a twice life-size bronze statue depicting the historic meeting of Chief Whitecap and John Lake considered to be the founding moment of the City of Saskatoon.

Another historic event has been captured for river front visitors to enjoy. The five-foot kedge anchor from the ill-fated sternwheeler, S.S. City of Medicine Hat, has been restored and placed on display under the Traffic Bridge. In 1908, less than a year after the bridge was opened, a boat crashed into a pier of the bridge and capsized – prompting claims that the event was Saskatchewan's biggest "maritime disaster."

The new Persephone Thea-

needs of the thousands already enjoying the river front, the city leased the newly-constructed river front pavilion to a group of



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The newly opened Ideas Inc. building is at full capacity and open for business. Photo credit: Ideas Inc.

tre enjoyed an incredible inaugural season with sold-out crowds for each of their productions. With a second "black box" theatre now open in the facility, attendance is expected to increase.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Senator Sid Buckwold Bridge, River Landing Phase II is already creating its own suc-

cess story. The newly opened Saskatoon Farmers' Market and Market Square are enjoying record crowds. Likewise, the Ideas Inc. business incubator is at capacity with new entrepreneurs operating one-of-a-kind retail stores and services through its commercial retail units.

Next year, 2009, will see sig-

nificant increases in activity on Phase II when the river front pathway, including the spectacular pedestrian bridge which arches over the river, will be fully open. As well, Isinger Park will be open and the development of the residential and commercial opportunities will begin.

All in all, an impressive first year for the development designed to bring people back to the river!



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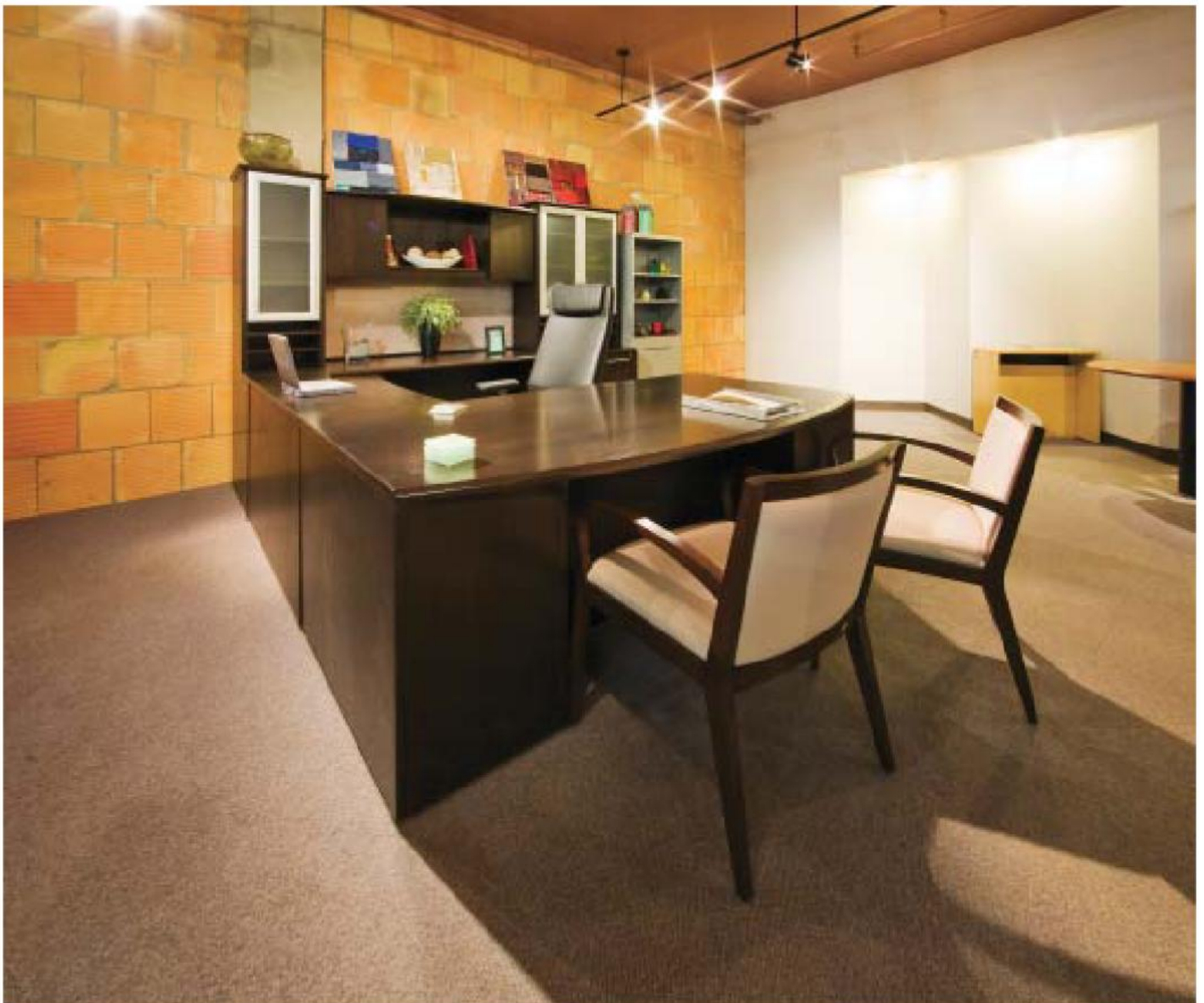
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Modern workstations and work centres combine compact design with good looks to fit into any decor.

When setting up your home office, keep in mind that you will want a space that allows you to work undisturbed or lets you

work without disturbing other members of your household. A quiet corner of the dining room, a spare bedroom or a comfortable room in the basement can make a suitable office.

The essential components include a desk or computer table,





a side table or credenza, a filing cabinet, some storage space and a good executive or computer chair. Additionally, you might consider a couple of guest chairs or a small sofa if you expect to be meeting with people.

Good lighting is critical to keeping your work environment comfortable and preventing eye-strain. Aim for lighting that comes from above and behind, so that it illuminates your work without casting shadows or causing glare. Ceiling track lighting provides flexibility and

is available in a variety of styles. Augment overhead lighting with a good desk lamp and other accessories that illuminate your tasks.

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Photo on previous page:

All Wood Veneer group in walnut, maple or cherry (cherry shown) by CWI Manufacturing, a division of Creative Wood Interiors Ltd. of Osler, Saskatchewan, \$16,282, available in standard or custom designs. Veneers are hand selected, sewn and thermally-pressed at the factory, a process that avoids delamination and flaws in veneer joints. Shown are: bow front desk, 36 x 78; knee space and modesty panels; arched front bridge section with pneumatic key board lift; rectangular top, 18 x 60, supporting a closed tower hutch (left) with partial

aluminum framed, acid-etched glass door, centre hutch with two-door, open-centre top section, closed tower hutch with two partial aluminum framed, acid-etched glass doors; and combination file cabinet pedestal with lateral file insert, bushed nickel rod pulls. (Not shown: wood pencil drawer, 17 x 21; black PVC grommets for passage of computer and electrical cables; halogen task light in hutch.)

Photo above: Rectangular top, 18 x 60, closed tower hutch (left) with partial aluminum framed, acid-etched glass door, centre hutch with two-door, open-centre top section, closed tower hutch with two partial aluminum framed, acid-etched glass doors; and combination file cabinet pedestal with lateral file insert. A portion of the arched front bridge section with pneumatic key board lift is at left.

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BACKWORDS

The Good Neighbour Guide Living in Harmony with Folks from the Other Side

Are you a good neighbour or a bad one? Could you be a better one? To recognize the importance of the relationships that exist next to your personal property line is to realize the necessity of making a very common situation work. Like countries or nations, we are all very much stuck in the place we choose, forced to make do with the neighbours we have. There is almost no ability to put our homes on our backs and go elsewhere so we are forced into looking for ways to keep our personal kingdoms operating in at least partial harmony with those on either side. In that spirit, here are five tips to go a few steps closer toward creating a whole world full of good neighbours.

1. Be Friendly

This one ought to be considered a no-brainer. If your current method of cross-fence communication ranges from rude silences to hostile sneers to drunken heckles, you can be fairly certain any potential



neighborhood bliss is a long way off. Stop being a sour jerk and open up a bit. Those people live next door, for goodness sake. Now, no one is suggesting you devolve into some mindlessly sycophantic dweeb with a spaced-out grin plastered on your face, or worse, becoming so obsequiously annoying that you could drive the Dalai Lama to the point of insanity. A kind word, or even just a genuine "Good morning" regularly is more than enough to show your neighbor that you are pleasant, mature and certainly willing and able to hold a discussion should the need arise. And make no

mistake, whether it's because of something they did or something you plan to do, the need for communication will eventually arise.

2. Be Considerate

This one is a little more difficult because it requires you to step outside of yourself more than just a little bit. For example, let's say you received a brand new accordion for your birthday. Deciding that some regular, outdoors and late-at-night practice of your new noisemaker does not exactly reek of consideration. You must take into account

the very real likelihood that those living next door to you would not exactly welcome the cacophonous sound of what could only be described as suffering cats repeated over and over during the wee hours. Use a little common sense and treat others as you would like to be treated. If folks are in their backyard having a barbecue, resist the urge to fire up your lawnmower and weed the garden instead. It shows you care enough to be considerate.

3. Pay Attention

This is one of the most underutilized skills available to everyone. Take your time one day and look at the things your neighbour likes to do. Also, pay attention to the things they never seem to do. This is the most valuable method of discerning what bothers another person and what does not. If your neighbour spends hours upon hours working in her garden, you can be fairly assured that any activity that involves you hopping the fence and slicing the heads off her blossoming sunflowers would annoy her quite deeply. Similarly, if you were to observe that garbage barely comes to rest on their lawn before it is picked up and



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disposed of, you can be certain that by personally grabbing and cleaning up whatever trash you may see on their property would be a great way to put a smile on their face.

4. Be Specific

This tip is extremely important. No one is advocating for some kind of Stepford-like adherence to a false happiness that everything is hunky-dory when it is not. There will be disagreements and circumstances where problems arise due most often to nothing more than your own unique and personally dissimilar ways of doing things. Do not let these sorts of disagreements fester. If you make it clear to your neighbor that you personally do not enjoy lending out tools or other items, you will successfully remove any need to plan a late-night Ninja style raid to repossess your missing weed whacker.

5. Be Generous

The person next door to you might be there for as little as five short months or as long as 55 long years. You will never know exactly how much time you will have together. Knowing that, what does it hurt to be generous? I'm not saying to make your neighbour a co-signer on a Swiss bank account but a small gift at Christmas or some extra baking a few times a year is a

great way to show your sense of community and a sincere desire to be friendly. Not everyone wants to be best buddies but by refusing to be stingy with the smiles, kind words or even a shovel or two, you'll find that the life you can lead as a neighbour will be a rewarding one, enhancing the very comfort of your home.

Obviously these ideas are not going to work if you happen to live next door to a Hell's Angels clubhouse or some Jeffrey Dahmer wannabe. In such cases these ideas would more than likely lead to an early and gruesome demise, so exercise some caution and a little street smarts when it comes to figuring out just who your neighbours really are before you attempt to be good and neighbourly.

After reading these tips, you may have discovered that the hardest neighbour to get along with is actually you. And if that's the case, you're going to need all the help you can get.

All of us have our own weirdo points of view or personal issues and prejudices that form who we are. If we can sometimes take just a few moments to step outside ourselves and see how even the little things we do affects others, we may just find surprisingly simple ways to make living with our neighbours a whole lot easier.

We're all in this together, so can't we all just get along?

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